

**Suggested Remarks for the
Acting USAID Mission Director
Michael C. Trott
CLIC Turn-over Ceremony
Lapak National School of Fisheries
Siasi, Sulu
June 9, 2006**

Honorable Secretary Jesus Dureza,
Honorable Governor Loong,
Honorable Mayor Anni,
Principal Adil,
PTCA President Juain,
Colleagues from the United States Government
and the GEM Program,
Teachers and Students,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

Mabuhay! Asalamu Alaikum! Good Morning!

It is a great pleasure and a privilege to be
here with you all today, as we formally turn
over a CLIC Assistance Package to the Lapak
National School of Fisheries in Siasi,
Sulu.

This morning, assistance from the American people is providing 7 internet-connected computers, a printer, and related items to the PTCA and the school. In addition, over the next two or three months, selected teachers from the school will receive training on using computers and the resources of the internet to enrich the school's educational programs.

These internet-connected computers are being provided under USAID's Computer Literacy and Internet Connection, or CLIC Program, which encourages teachers and students to use computers and the internet as resources to enhance learning. The computers also enable students to tap the vast resources of the internet to conduct research, establish

their own e-mail accounts, and communicate with other students throughout the world.

The internet connection provides you access to a vast highway that can take you beyond the borders of your community, beyond your province, and beyond your country, and indeed, to any destination in the world.

You can now be connected, at the click of a mouse, to information and to people from other societies and cultures all around the world.

So, though you may live geographically on an island, you now are part of an inter-connected, borderless world.

Some sociologists and economists see the peoples of the world as being split into two distinct groups: those with access to the new information technologies, and those without such access. They refer to the split as "the digital divide." Those people without access to the new technologies are seen as being on "the wrong side of the digital divide."

The U.S. Government's objective in supporting the CLIC program is to try to make sure that children in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago do not end up on the wrong side of the digital divide.

As a CLIC partner, the Lapak National School of Fisheries received the resources needed

to get its students started on the road to the global information community. Through CLIC, this school thus becomes part of an expanding network of 315 schools in Mindanao and Sulu that are already participating in the global community.

The Lapak National School of Fisheries is one of eleven schools in the Province of Sulu - and the first school in Siasi - that has become our CLIC partners. But it will not be the last. USAID anticipates providing internet-connected computers to several more schools in Sulu province over the coming months.

This installation really does represent a true partnership, between the US and

Philippines Governments, on the one hand, and the parents and teachers of this school, represented here today by Police Inspector Juain, the President of the Lapak National School of Fisheries PTCA, on the other hand. The PTCA has agreed to accept financial responsibility for the maintenance of these computers, and for paying the internet connection fees at the end of one year.

We recognize and understand that the seven computers being turned over here today may not be sufficient to provide every student in this school with as much computer time as he or she would like, or might need. But we think these computers provide a good start. And we are prepared to do more. We will

increase the number of computers provided to this school, if you will also do more.

If the PTCA is prepared, using resources it obtains from its own members or from the community at large, to procure additional computers for the school, we will match whatever the PTCA does. If the PTCA will provide one additional computer, so will USAID! If the PTCA will provide five additional computers, we will also provide five additional computers.

This is our challenge to you, as President of the PTCA, Inspector Juain, and to the members of the PTCA. I hope that, together, we will be able to expand the current facilities, and strengthen our partnership

with the PTCA, with the parents, and, most importantly, with the students.

Mr. PTCA President, the ball is in your court.

Thank you, Principal Adil and PTCA President Juain, for representing and supporting the Lapak National School of Fisheries so ably and effectively. Thanks also to all of you present here for your warm welcome and hospitality.

Mabuhay tayong lahat!